

1 Samuel 15:4-35 - Thursday, February 27th, 2014

- Last week we only tackled the first three verses so as to better understand the severity and finality of God's judgment on Amalek and Saul.
- Absent this understanding, there's more of a propensity for a misunderstanding of why it is, and the way it is, God's justice is meted out.
- This because, God judges Saul for not destroying all the Amalekites, who God was judging for their unspeakable evil against the Israelites.

(4) So Saul gathered the people together and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men of Judah. (5) And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and lay in wait in the valley. (6) Then Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart, get down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is what Saul does here is a demonstration of God's wisdom and mercy.
- The reason I point that out is because sometimes I think I'm a little too hard on Saul in how I teach about Saul only pointing out the wrongs.
- Another reason I find this interesting is the Kenites heed Saul's warning and depart from the Amalekites, and not ally with the Amalekites.

Henry Morris offers insight as to why, "The Kenites were commonly associated with the Midianites and Amalekites, inveterate enemies of Israel. Yet Moses' father-in-law was a Kenite and Jael and Heber were Kenites who had helped defeat the Canaanites."

(7) And Saul attacked the Amalekites, from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt. (8) He also took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. (9) But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all *that was* good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

- Here we see that the good Saul did was short lived by virtue of what he does here chief of which is sparing Agag king of the Amalekites.
- There are several things that we need to look at here before we move on, the first of which is that Saul's partial obedience is disobedience.
- It's been said that people are prone to obey God when it doesn't cost them anything, but disobey God when it might cost them something.

Charles Spurgeon - "This was half-obedience, which is whole rebellion. Many are ready to slay their disreputable sins, but their fashionable transgressions they cannot give up."

- Lest you think I'm being too hard on Saul again, notice in verse nine where it says they were unwilling, not unable to utterly destroy them.
- In other words, they could have obeyed God's command but chose instead to disobey God's command because they were unwilling to.
- The reason I highlight this is it speaks to how God's commands are not burdensome such that He enables us to do what He calls us to do.
- There's something else here I think we would do well to take note of, and it has to do with the typology we looked at in last weeks study.
- More specifically, Amalek being a type of the flesh and as such, we must utterly destroy the flesh, before the flesh can utterly destroy us.
- We see this even more graphically when years later Saul is killed by none other than an Amalekite all because he spared this king Agag.

2 Samuel 1:6-15 NIV "I happened to be on Mount Gilboa," the young man said, "and there was Saul, leaning on his spear, with the chariots and riders almost upon him. (7) When he turned around and saw me, he called out to me, and I said, 'What can I do?' (8) He asked me, 'Who are you?' 'An Amalekite,' I answered. (9) "Then he said to me, 'Stand over me and kill me! I am in the throes of death, but I'm still alive.' (10) "So I stood over him and killed him, because I knew that after he had fallen he could not survive. And I took the crown that was on his head and the band on his arm and have brought them here to my lord." (11) Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them. (12) They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. (13) David said to the young man who brought him the report, "Where are you from?" "I am the son of an alien, an Amalekite," he answered. (14) David asked him, "Why were you not afraid to lift your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?" (15) Then David called one of his men and said, "Go, strike him down!" So he struck him down, and he died.

- Then, fast forward about two hundred more years, and we read of yet another Amalekite who would seek to destroy the Jewish people.
- Esther 3:1 NIV After these events, King Xerxes honored Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles.

- There's one more thing here I'd like for us to look at before we move on to verse ten, and it has to do with why Saul would spare king Agag.
- Moreover, why would the Israelites dishonor and disobey God by rejoicing in His judgment over the Amalekites and take the best spoils?
- Here's what I'm thinking, as ironic as it was, I'm of the belief that it was because they were gratifying their flesh, namely for self-gratification.

F.B. Meyer - "To spare the best of Amalek is surely equivalent to sparing some root of evil, some plausible indulgence, some favorite sin. For us, Agag must stand for that evil propensity, which exists in all of us, for self-gratification; and to spare Agag is to be merciful to ourselves, to exonerate and palliate [excuse] our failures, and to condone our besetting sin."

- I'll take it a step further and suggest Saul's self-gratification led to the Israelites following suit and imitating him by doing the same thing.
- As one commentator so aptly wrote, "If Saul spare Agag, the people will take liberty to spare the best of the spoil . . . the sins of the great command imitation."

(10) Now the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, (11) "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments." And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the LORD all night.

- How sad is this? I find it interesting that Samuel would cry all night out of his grief, instead of becoming outraged at Saul out of his anger.
- Furthermore, I also find it most interesting that Samuel wouldn't actually rejoice all night that he had finally been vindicated in Saul's sin.
- The fact of the matter is, that's just not who Samuel is, in that he doesn't gloat when others fail. His heart breaks over what breaks God's.

Proverbs 24:17-18 NIV Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when he stumbles, do not let your heart rejoice, (18) or the LORD will see and disapprove and turn his wrath away from him.

Charles Spurgeon - "The rejection of sinners is a great grief to saints: God has no pleasure in the death of sinners, nor have His people."

- By the way, don't get tripped up on verse eleven where it says that the Lord regretted greatly that He had set up Saul as the King of Israel.
- Here's why, this is what's known as an "anthropomorphism," which is God using human terms in order for us to understand God's heart.
- The reason I bring this up is because one can wrongly assume that God made a mistake for which He had expressed remorse and regret.

(12) So when Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul went to Carmel, and indeed, he set up a monument for himself; and he has gone on around, passed by, and gone down to Gilgal." (13) Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed *are* you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD."

- What Saul says here is evidence of our propensity to be self-deceived such that he actually believes he has fully obeyed God's command.
- I'm of the belief Saul did not have any regard for obeying God. The reason I say that is because he doesn't realize he's been found out.
- The point being is, be sure your sin will find you out. Any willful disobedience, especially on the part of leaders, will be sure to find you out.

(14) But Samuel said, "What then *is* this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" (15) And Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed." (16) Then Samuel said to Saul, "Be quiet! And I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night." And he said to him, "Speak on." (17) So Samuel said, "When you *were* little in your own eyes, *were* you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel? (18) Now the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' (19) Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD?" (20) And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. (21) But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."

- I think we need to be careful here with what we see Saul doing because we have the tendency to disenfranchise ourselves from the text.
- Let me explain, we're very good at shedding ourselves in a favorable light so as to excuse ourselves from, and justify ourselves in, our sin.
- Here's what I'm thinking, Saul can't see that he's sinned, and in so doing, he's justifying and explaining away what he did with half truths.

(22) So Samuel said: "Has the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And* to heed than the fat of rams. (23) For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from *being* king."

- This is that often quoted famous passage concerning one obeying God being better than one making a sacrifice to God out of their guilt.
- By that I mean, often times people sacrifice more for God with the hope that they can alleviate their guilty conscience for disobeying God.
- The problem with this faulty mindset is that obedience is done in humility as serving whereas sacrifice may be done in pride as self-serving.

Psalms 51:15-17 NIV O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. (16) You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. (17) The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

(24) Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. (25) Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD." (26) But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel." (27) And as Samuel turned around to go away, *Saul* seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. (28) So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, *who is* better than you. (29) And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He *is* not a man, that He should relent." (30) Then he said, "I have sinned; *yet* honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD your God." (31) So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD.

- Don't think for a minute this is a genuine repentance, which comes from a godly sorrow on the part of Saul. It's the sorrow of being caught.
- What Saul does here is reveal his true heart in how that he would rather be wrong with God and be right with people in order to save face.
- Be that as it may, Samuel sees right through him, which is why he takes the posture he does with him by pronouncing judgment upon him.

(32) Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me." So Agag came to him cautiously. And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." (33) But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal. (34) Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house at Gibeath of Saul. (35) And Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death. Nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul, and the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.

- And so the chapter ends, but not before Samuel doing that which Saul in his willful disobedience would refuse to do and put Agag to death.
- I find it interesting we're told how Samuel would never see Saul again until the day of his death though he's only about 10 miles away.
- I point that out because I believe it speaks to the issue of our breaking fellowship with those close to us under the banner of righteousness.